Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy/Equal Opportunity

BLACK AMERICANS

IN DEFENSE

OF OUR NATION

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THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

(1775-1783)

Figures show that 500,000 blacks were counted among the 2,500,000 colonists by the time of the beginning of the American Revolution. As insignificant as their roles might have seemed during the French and Indian War and the many encounters with the Indians, blacks had proven themselves to be capable fighters. This had little or no value since they were not wanted in the Continental Army. Even their performance at Lexington and Concord at the outset of that war where they fought with the "minute men" had done nothing to enhance their quest to become involved in the young Revolutionary War. Thus, they were denied an opportunity to become a part of the newly formed "regular Army."

It would appear that since the blacks realized that this war was for concepts of freedom, liberty and equality, nothing was going to diminish their fervor to join the ranks of those whites who were prone to pursue the causes espoused in that war. A review of the black Americans' action during that war shows without a doubt that they wanted to play a role.

The black American's role in the Revolutionary War actually started five years before the war began. On March 5, 1770, a crowd of angry Boston citizens confronted a group of British soldiers, protesting the manner of taxation and other actions which the British had put into practice.

As the apparently leaderless crowd vented its rage against the British soldiers who were charged with seeing to it that the laws of England were obeyed by the colonists, an escaped slave by the name of Crispus took control of the protest action and confronted the British soldiers directly.

Private Hugh Montgomery of the British Regulars raised his weapon and fired upon the angry crowd. The black slave Crispus was struck by the first volley and he fell dead at the feet of the British soldiers. Crispus Attucks thus became the first American to die in what became the cause of the American Revolution. Four whites were also killed in the encounter. These five men were buried in an integrated grave in the Boston Commons. The Crispus Attucks Statue and

The black slave, Crispus Attucks, was the first to die in the Boston Massacre , March 5, 1770

Monument are visited by thousands of people annually as a Boston attraction.

When the war began on April 18, 1775, blacks did participate in the first skirmish and in other battles throughout the war. The fear that armed blacks might be tempted to either revolt against their masters or that they might join the ranks of the British was a factor of great concern among the colonists. The expected revolt did not occur, but many blacks did join the British ranks. This was especially true when the British promised them their freedom if they joined them.

The Crispus Attucks Monument in the Boston Commons

On September 24, 1775, John Adams wrote in his diary:

"They say if one thousand regular (British) troops should land in Georgia and their commander provided them with arms and clothes enough, and would proclaim freedom for all Negroes who would join his camp, 20,000 Negroes would join it from the two provinces (Georgia and South Carolina) in a fortnight... so that all the slaves of the Tories would be lost as well as those of the Whigs." (Charles Francis Adams, *The Works of John Adams,* Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1856, Vol II, page 428).

Many colonists had feelings such as those expressed by Adams, but that did not change their attitudes about blacks being armed and fighting in the American Revolution. In May of 1775, barely one month after blacks had fought at Lexington and Concord, the Committee for Safety of the Massachusetts Legislature presented a legislative resolution that read:

"Resolved, that it is the opinion of this Committee, as the contest now between Great Britain and the Colonies respects the liberties and privileges of the latter, which the Colonies are determined to maintain, that the admission of any persons, as soldiers, into the army now raising, but only such as are freemen, will be inconsistent with the principles that are to be supported, and reflect dishonor on the colony, and that no slaves be admitted into this army, upon any consideration whatever."

That position, however, was not shared by the British, who were suffering from severe manpower shortages. On November 7, 1775, John Murray, the Earl of Dunmore, issued a proclamation which stated:

"...and I do hereby further declare all intented (sic) servants, Negroes and others, (appertaining to Rebels) free, and that are able and willing to bear arms, they joining His Majesty's Troops, as soon as may be, for the more speedily reducing of the colony to a proper sence (sic) of their duty, to His Majesty's crown and dignity."

One month later, almost three hundred blacks, with "Liberty to Slaves" inscribed on their uniforms, were mem-

bers of Lord Dunmore's "Ethiopian Regiment." In that same month, George Washington authorized recruiting officers to sign up free Negroes "desirous of enlisting." Slave participation, however, was prohibited at this time, and it was reinforced by Washington's General Orders of February 21, 1776.

The British promise to give freedom to any blacks who joined them began to pay dividends. The colonists responded by allowing black slaves to serve as "substitute soldiers" for their masters. In another response the colonists issued a bold threat to those blacks who chose to join the British. The threat stated:

"Should there be any among the Negroes weak enough to believe that Lord Dunmore intends to do them a kindness and wicked enough to provoke the fury of the Americans against their defenseless fathers and mothers, their wives, their women and their children, let them only consider the difficulty of effecting their escape and what they must expect to suffer if they fall into the hands of the Americans." (Laura Wilkins, *The Negro Soldier; A Selected Compilation*, p. 45)

Nevertheless, the Colonial position and the British gesture played right into the hands of the British as the number of blacks willing to take that chance continued to increase. It is estimated that some 1,000 black slaves received their freedom upon escaping and serving behind the British lines.

Although it was becoming obvious that the increasing colonial need for manpower was a problem for the Continental legislature, the colonial position was not making many changes with regard to the free black, and certainly the black slave. On December 30, 1775, Washington wrote: "As the general is informed, that a number of free Negroes are desirous of enlisting."

The Battle of Bunker Hill also involved black patriots.

On January 16, 1776, Congress resolved that "free Negroes who have served faithfully in the Army at Cambridge may be reenlisted therein..." (John C. Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington,* Volume IV, Government Printing Office, 1944, page 194).

Washington's initial feeling that only "free whites" should serve in the Continental Army was slowly undergoing some changes. This was occasioned more by circumstances and need rather than a change of heart. Alexander Hamilton had suggested that "Negroes will make very excellent soldiers with proper management." He added, "Extraordinary exigencies demand extraordinary means." (Alexander Hamilton, *ibid*). In that same year (1779) six hundred slaves and free blacks from the French West Indies joined in the siege of British Forces on the French Garrison of Savannah, Georgia.

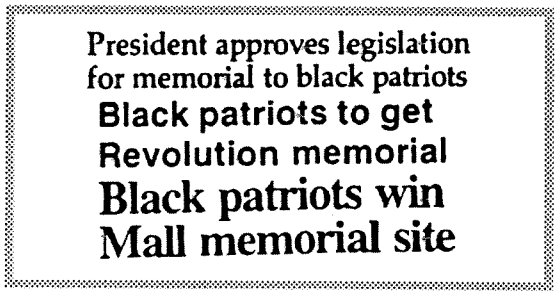
Also in that same year, half of the force that drove the British from Louisiana was black. The issue of using blacks as soldiers had been resolved after Valley Forge when Washington's troop strength was dangerously low. Not only did he welcome free blacks, but slaves were also utilized without complaint during the latter stages of the war.

The story of the black American's participation in the War for Independence, as some called it, shows with unmistakable clarity that blacks were in the war from the beginning through its end. For example, Salem Poor was cited for bravery at Bunker Hill and went on to serve with George Washington at Valley Forge.

Jack Sisson was among the 40 volunteers who staged a commando raid on General Prescott's Headquarters at Newport, Rhode Island. James Armistad was a black spy who worked out of the headquarters of General Lafayette. Prince Whipple and Oliver Cromwell accompanied George Washington when he crossed the Delaware.

Edward Hector fought bravely in the Battle of Brandywine in 1777. James Robinson was a Maryland slave who fought at Yorktown and was decorated by General Lafayette. By 1778, each of General Washington's brigades had an average of 42 black soldiers. To state matters briefly, it is a known historical fact that blacks fought in almost every major battle from Bunker Hill to Yorktown.

Maurice Barboza, a strong advocate of recognition of black heroes in the Americal Revolution, has led a long and difficult fight to a successful determination for a monument in the nation's Capital in honor of the 5,000 black patriots who served this country in that war. Mr. Barboza has been instrumental in getting support from almost all quarters of the spectrum of American life in this endeavor. It is significant to note that The Sons of the American Revolution emerged as one of his strongest support groups.



Headlines showing the honoring of black Revolutionary War patriots .

THE WAR OF 1812

1812-1815

The War of 1812 was basically a naval war, and the manpower need was mostly in the army. It was not expected that this country would be involved in another war so soon. Therefore, it came as no great surprise when in 1792 Congress passed a law restricting service in the military to "each and every free and able-bodied white citizen of the respective states." (Bernard C. Nalty and Morris McGregor, *Blacks in the Military: Essential Documents*, p. 13.)

In 1798, the Secretary of War wrote to the commander of the Marine Corps that "No Negro, mulatto or Indian is to be enlisted." (Nalty and McGregor, *ibid.*)When war started again in 1812, blacks were still excluded from the Army and the Marines. They had not been excluded from joining the Navy.

Impressing black and white American seamen was a factor in the cause of the War of 1812.

It was therefore in line with standard policy when the blacks' attempts to volunteer for service in the Army and the Marines were not allowed. However, when Louisiana became a state in 1812, the legislature authorized the governor to enroll free black landowners in the militia. The group of black militia men known as Free Men of Color had been refused voluntary service in the territorial militia in 1803, but was allowed to enlist as a battalion in 1812. The commanding officer was white, but three of its lieutenants were black.

New York became the first northern state to seek participation by blacks in the War of 1812 when approximately two thousand blacks, slave and free, were enlisted and organized into two regiments. The slaves were promised their freedom after the war. The war had officially ended before another black battalion which had been organized in Philadelphia saw any action.

According to Nalty and McGregor, "It had been the War of 1812, frustrating and unpopular" which produced manpower crisis that compelled the American armed forces to call upon free blacks to sustain their ranks, particularly in the Navy. (page 40)

The distinguishing action of black soldiers in this war came in the Battle of New Orleans (even though the war was officially over). The city had been threatened by the British, but local residents steadfastly refused the services of

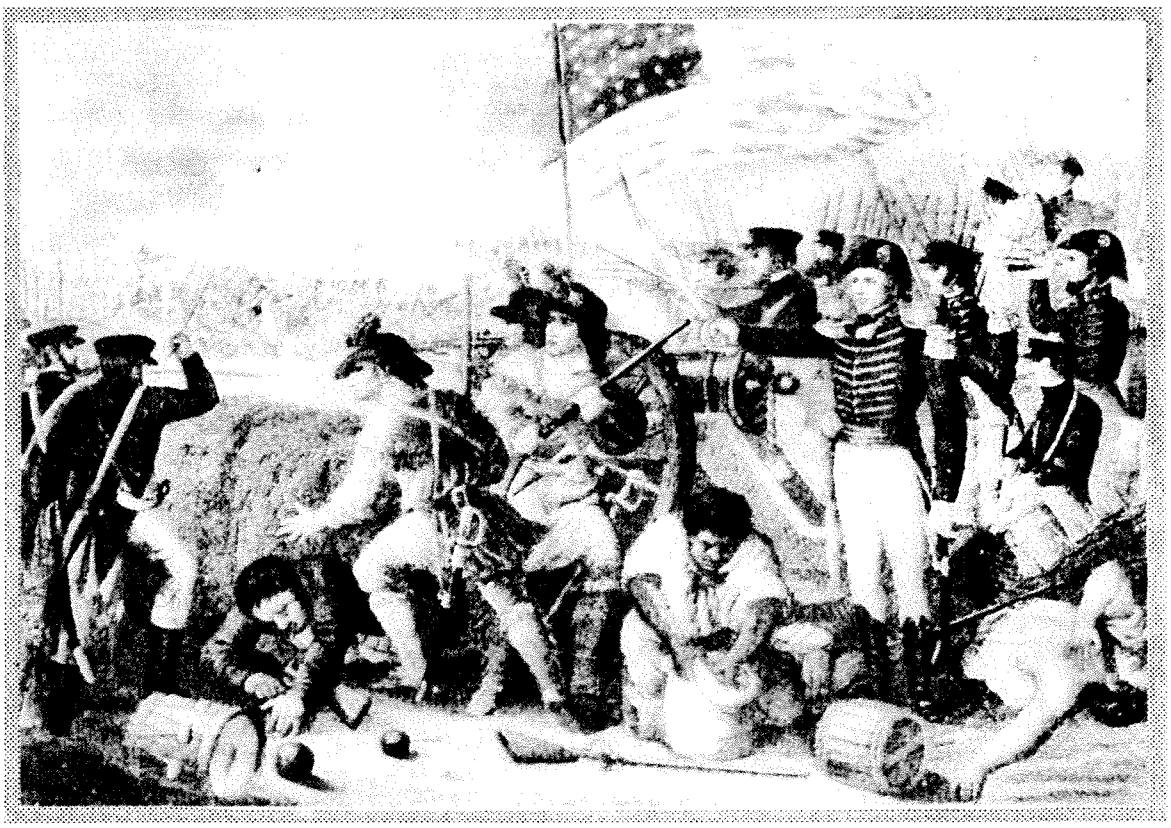
the Battalion of Free Men of Color. Andrew Jackson insisted that the offer be accepted.

The United States prevailed in this unnecessary battle, and the blacks had been a factor. Their contribution was soon forgotten and they were denied permission to participate in the annual parades celebrating the victory in the Battle of New Orleans.

This was not the case with the Navy. While it is impossible to determine exactly how many blacks fought with the United States Navy in the War of 1812, some sources estimate that between ten and twenty percent of the Navy at that time was black. When Perry won his great victory on Lake Erie, at least one out of every ten sailors on his ship was black. That was the naval action in which one commander had complained that he was being sent too many blacks.

The impressment of American sailors by British ship captains was one of the several reasons why this war had come about in the first place. Since so many American blacks were slaves, the British felt that taking blacks from American ships would be tolerated. Thus, many blacks were taken aboard British ships. America saw this as a denial of freedom of the seas.

Black sailors fought with Commodore Perry in his victory on Lake Erie.



Free (black) Men of Color helped Andrew Jackson win the Battle of New Orleans

THE SEMINOLE WARS

(1816-1842)

Throughout the history of the existence of what is now the United States, the black Americans have always made themselves available to the military in times of both peace and war. There have been times when they were fighting on both sides of a "declared" war as in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the Civil War.

There have been times when their presence was felt on the "other" side as in the First and Second Seminole Wars. In terms of times spent in such wars, the blacks spent fifteen years in wars in which they were on both sides and ten years in which they were on the "other" side.

In terms of years spent in wars in which they were on the "American" side exclusively, there have been twenty five years spent in such wars--Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, The Korean Conflict and the Vietnam Era War (1960-1973).

While thousands of blacks went to great pains to enlist in the Colonial and the young American Armed Forces during times of military conflict, a significant number of black slaves took advantage of the prevailing confusion occasioned by military conflict and escaped into British and (later) Spanish Florida.

Both England and Spain refused to return these runaway slaves to their masters and owners. General Andrew Jackson who had willingly accepted the assistance of black militia units in the Battle of New Orleans, led an expedition into Florida to capture runaway slaves.

Blacks who had settled with the Indians and intermarried with them had established themselves as farmers and elements of a protective militia. They provided much of the resistance to Jackson's troops. It was at this point that blacks became engaged in warfare with the Americans, against the American whites.

For a considerable period of time, the blacks and Indians fought a very effective war against Jackson's regulars. However, that effectiveness decreased. When "Colonel Nichol's Army" of Indians and runaway slaves lost "Fort Negro," their stronghold, to the American Regulars in 1816, the fortunes of war went downhill for them.

After three years of fighting (1816-1819), Spain ceded its Florida territory to the United States and the First Seminole War ended.

The general opinion prevailed that the defeat of "Colonel Nichol's Army" would bring peace to the area, and the whites could settle and live there unmolested. That was not to be the case. Peace only lasted for a short period of time.

The Second Seminole War began sixteen years after the First Seminole War ended. This war, which was fought

to remove the Seminole Indians from Florida because they posed a barrier to the settlement of whites in the area, lasted for seven years.

Free blacks, who had permanently settled with the Indians and runaway slaves who had found a stronghold of freedom, became the core of the Indian resistance in this war. These blacks consisted of from one-fourth to one-third of the warrior strength which fought the regulars in the forced removal war. Very few blacks were counted among the American regulars.

Both the slaves and the free blacks had a working knowledge of the American language, value system and idioms. They also had some idea of American military tactics. They and their Indian allies were masters of the art of hit-and-run forays and surprise attacks. They engendered a seven-year war that was very costly to the United States in both resources and finances.

Some 2,000 soldiers were killed, and the war cost the government between forty and sixty million dollars.

This prolonged war was additional proof that blacks could fight, and generate and execute military initiatives. It also showed that they possessed leadership qualities in military endeavors. Perhaps more than anything else, it helped to reinforce the fear in the minds of many whites that it was indeed dangerous to arm blacks and teach them military techniques and tactics.

It was still remembered by whites that Gabriel Prosser had attempted a slave revolt in Richmond, Virginia in 1800 and Denmark Vessey had attempted one in Charleston, South Carolina in 1822. It was against this background that the Army Ordinance of 1820 which prohibited "Negroes or Mulattoes from enlisting" began to be strictly enforced.

Osceola, Chief of the Seminoles

Negro Abraham (center) served as interpreter for the Seminole Indians in their 1825 negotiations with the United States in Washington, D.C.

THE CIVIL WAR

(1861-1865)

Just as there are many twists to the American Civil War, there are many arguments with regard to just what caused that war in the first place. Many of the twists and arguments still prevail more than one hundred years after that war has ended. Some things, however, can be attributed to that war. In addition to the solidarity of the American union of states as one national entity and the freedom of the black from slavery and involuntary servitude, the American black emerged as a military source.

The participation of the American black in the Civil War was anything but a general conclusion at the beginning of that war. That participation came about as a result of a combination of events and circumstances, the most notable being an acute military manpower shortage.

On November 6, 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected the sixteenth President of the United States, having defeated John C. Breckenridge, John Bell and Stephen A. Douglass. Less than six weeks later, on December 20, South Carolina seceded from the Union. South Carolina's secession was followed by those of Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia and Louisiana, all in the month of January. On February 1, Texas left the Union.

In his March 4th Inaugural Address, Lincoln made it perfectly clear that he had no intention or legal right to interfere with the "institution" of slavery in those states "where it now exists." It could be argued that Lincoln's speech had some impact upon states that were undecided about seceding from the Union. However, on April 12 and 13, 1861, Confederate General Beauregard ordered the bombardment of Fort Sumter. When the Fort returned the fire on the 14th of April, the Civil War had begun.

On the very next day, Lincoln issued his proclamation calling for "The First 75,000":

> "Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, in virtue of the power in me vested by the Constitution and the laws, have thought fit to call forth, and hereby do call forth, the militia of the several states of the Union, to the aggregate number of seventy-five thousand..." (Carl Van Doren, *The Literary Works of Abraham Lincoln*, New York: The Press of the Readers Club, 1942.)

With the calling for these troops, the Civil War was now a factor of reality. However, it was made clear that none of the 75,000 was to be members of the Negro race. This position was taken because those in authority envisioned a short war, and they saw no practical use for black troops. Lincoln was also cautious that those border states that had not seceded from the Union would not become angry by the use of black troops and come into the conflict on the side of the Confederate States.

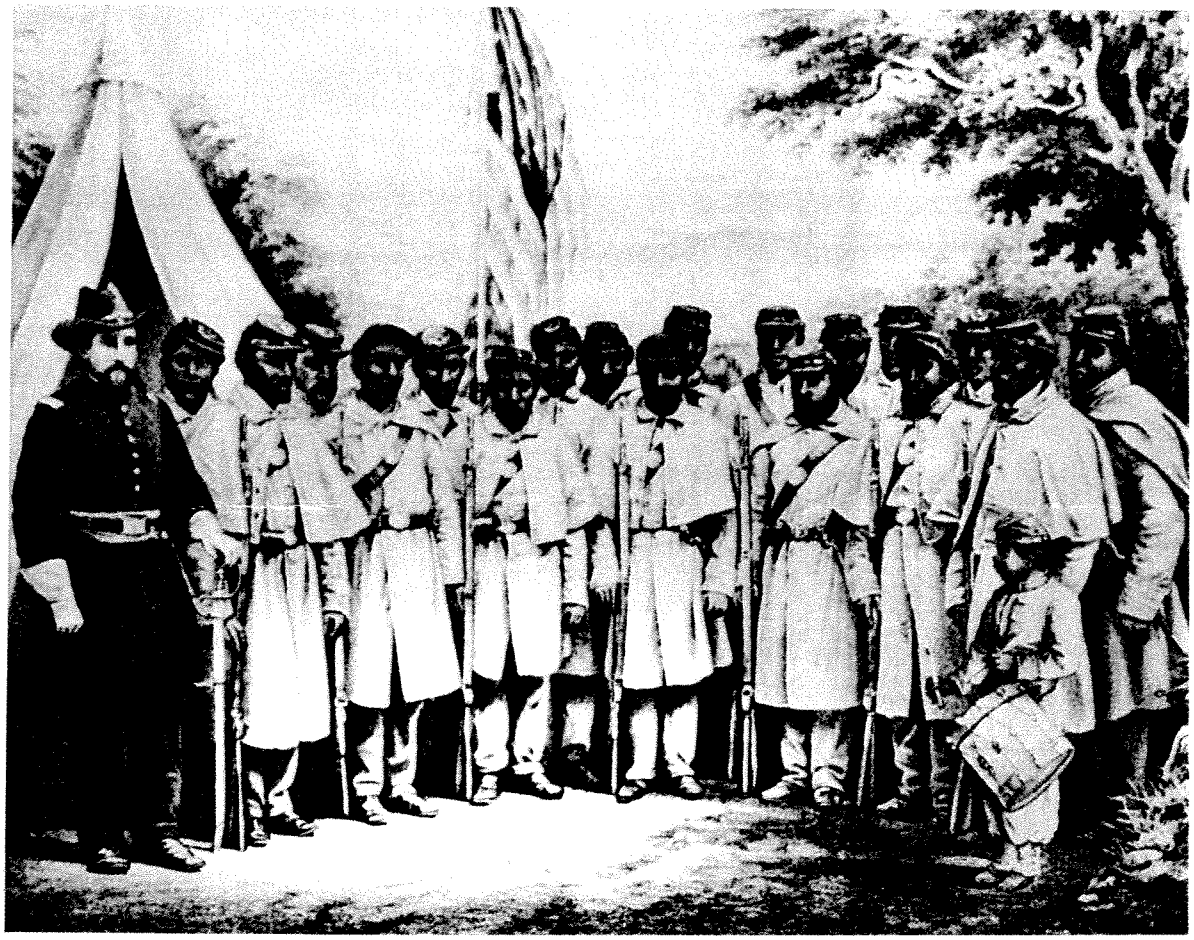
The Union leadership seemed to drastically underestimate the depth of Confederate resolve. There was also a reluctance to have blacks put under arms to kill white men.

Some of Lincoln's generals had no such reservations. In 1861, General John C. Fremont issued a proclamation of emancipation in Missouri, paving the way for the use of blacks in the war. (Samuel D. Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Vol. VI, pp. 107-108.)

General David Hunter raised a regiment of black soldiers off the coast of Georgia. Senator James H. Lane accepted blacks in two volunteer Kansas units.

Lincoln had made it clear that "This War Department has no intention at present to call into service of the Government any colored soldiers." However, a disappointing call for volunteers in 1862 forced him to consider drafting as an alternative to using black troops.

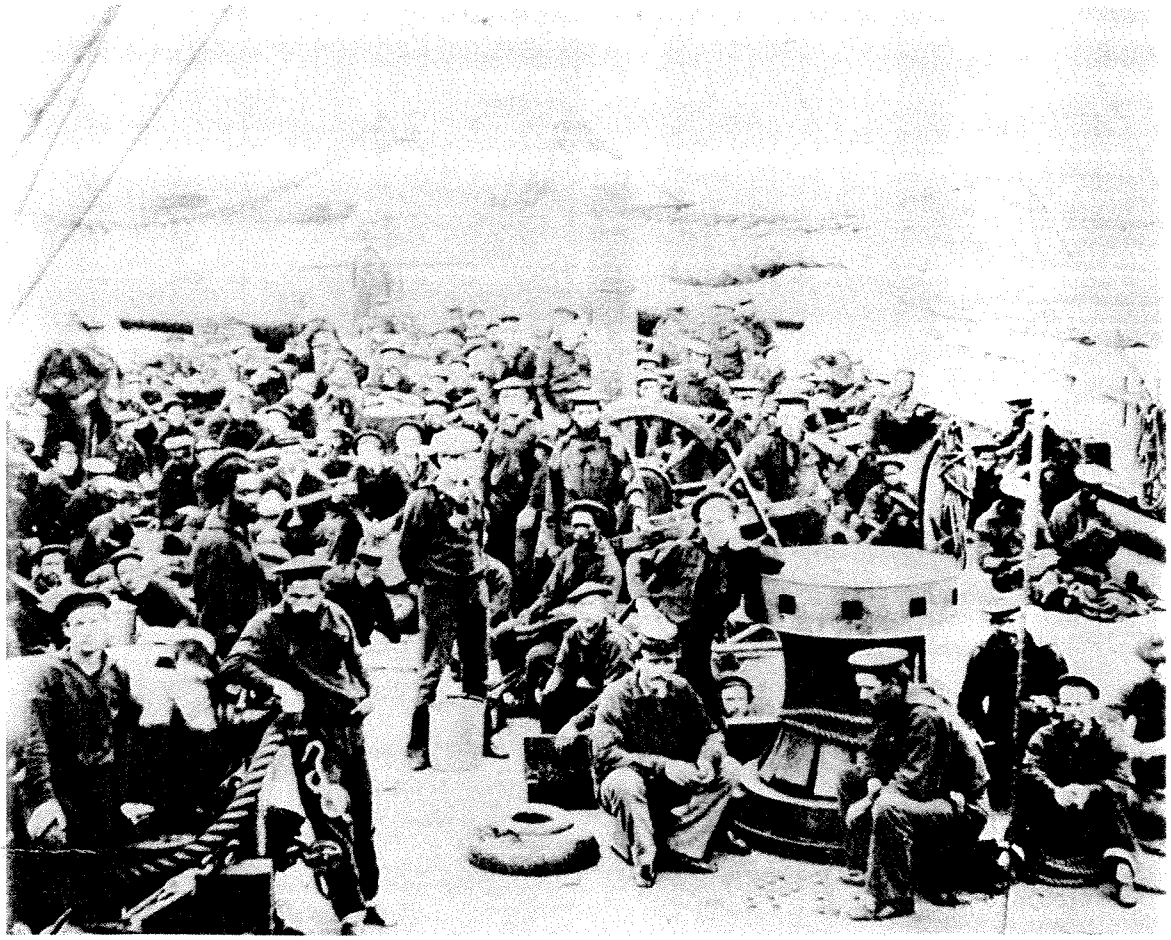
A War Department Order to Secretary Edwin Stanton on August 4, 1862 decreed that a draft of 300,000 militia be immediately called into service for nine months or sooner. (Richardson, *Ibid.*)



Civil War recruitment poster urging blacks to join the Union Army.

Pressure for the employment of black troops continued to mount to the point that Secretary Stanton issued orders that blacks could be used in limited capacities. The intent was to use blacks primarily in the construction of forts, bridges and other facilities.

In his proclamation, he opened the door for the participation of blacks in the military in the statement that: "And I further declare and make known that such persons of suitable conditions will be received into the armed services of the United States to garrison forts, positions,



Some 30,000 blacks served in the integrated Union Navy.

On September 22, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation (to become effective in 100 days) to the effect that on January 1, 1863 slaves in states and designated parts of states that were in rebellion against the Union shall be thenceforward and forever free. (Richardson, *Ibid.*)

stations, and other places and to man vessels of all sorts in said service." (Richardson, *Ibid.*, pp. 157-158.)

Soon after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, the Governor of Massachusetts raised the 54th Massachusetts (Colored) Volunteer Infantry Regiment. In May of 1863, the War

Department created a Bureau of Colored Troops to handle the recruitment and organization of black regiments. The officers of such regiments were to be white. The units were to be mustered into service immediately and were to be known as United States Colored Troops (USCT). New York organized three volunteer regiments.

Although the war had begun in 1861, it was not until May, June and July of 1863 that black units participated in any major engagements. They fought at Port Hudson and Millekins Bend in Louisiana and at Fort Wagner, South Carolina. Black privates were paid $10.00 per month, with $3.00 of that deducted for clothing. White privates were paid $13.00 per month with an additional $3.50 for clothing. The Massachusetts 54th did not accept any pay for a year in protest against that policy. Equal pay was not achieved until 1864.

There was a significant black male response to Frederick Douglass' appeal for "Men of Color, to Arms!" As the number of blacks began to increase dramatically, the abolition of slavery began to emerge as a new war objective.

The increased number of black soldiers resulted in the realization of one of Lincoln's greatest fears. That fear had been that black soldiers would not be accorded any of the civilities by the Confederate Army as either combatants or captives. Lincoln was right.

On July 30, 1863, the President reflected upon "the duty of every government to give protection to its citizens, of whatever class, color or condition, especially those duly organized as soldiers in the public service." (Richardson, *Ibid.*, p. 177.)

Lincoln stated further: "It is therefore ordered, that for every soldier of the United States killed in violation of the laws of war a rebel soldier shall be executed, and for every one enslaved by the enemy or sold into slavery a rebel soldier shall be placed at hard labor on the public works and continued at such labor until the other shall be released and receive the treatment due a prisoner."

As the manpower shortage among Lincoln's troops became even more acute, he ventured a calculated risk in the recruitment of slaves and former slaves from the neutral states of Maryland, Missouri (and Tennessee). His rationale was that these black soldiers would be used to give relief to white soldiers. Slave owners would also be compensated for the use of their slaves.

In his Third Annual Message, on December 8th, he said: "...of those who were slaves at the beginning of the rebellion, full 100,000 are now in the United States military service, about one-half of which number actually bear arms in the ranks, thus giving the double advantage of taking so much labor from the insurgent cause and supplying the places which otherwise must be filled with so many white men."

Continuing his speech, he said, "So far as tested, it is difficult to say that they (black troops in combat) are not as good soldiers as any."

From 1864 through the end of the war, the number of blacks actively participating in the conflict grew rapidly. In addition to those in combat, an additional

number saw service as teamsters, laborers, dock workers, and pioneers. There were less than 100 black officers. The myth about blacks lacking leadership qualities was put to rest at Chapin's Farm in September of 1864 when thirteen black non-commissioned officers received the Medal of Honor. All were cited for taking command of their units and leading them in assaults after their white officers had been either killed or wounded.

Of the 1,523 Medals of Honor awarded during the Civil War, twenty-three were awarded to black soldiers and sailors. The nearly two years that blacks participated in all phases of the Civil War resulted in heavy casualties. By 1865, over 37,000 black soldiers had died, almost 35 percent of all blacks who served in combat.

Major Martin R. Delaney was the highest ranking black officer in the Union Army during the Civil War. President Lincoln referred to the Harvard-trained officer as "the most extraordinary and intelligent black man." (William L. Katz, *Eyewitness: The Negro in American History*, Pittman Publication Corporation: New York, 1967, p. 147.)

Other blacks held higher rank than Delaney during the period of Reconstruction, but they were not in the Regular Army. Each of these was from South Carolina except a brigadier general from the state of Louisiana. The others were:

Major General Robert B. Elliott

Brigadier General Samual J. Lee

Brevet Brigadier General William B. Nash

Brigadier General Joseph Hayne Rainey

Brigadier General H. W. Purvis

Major General Prince Rivers

Major General Robert Smalls

Brigadier General William J. Whipper

There is evidence that blacks served in the Confederate Army, but several factors such as fear that, once armed, they would turn against their masters, and the pride of Southerners made such recordkeeping uncommon. The eminent historian John Hope Franklin wrote:

> "On March 13, 1865, a bill was signed by President (Jefferson) Davis which authorized him to call on each state for her quota of 300,000 additional troops, irrespective of color, on condition that slaves be recruited from any state should not exceed 25 percent of the able-bodied slave population between (ages) eighteen and forty-five." (John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of the American Negro,* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967, p. 289.)

Many blacks were cited for bravery and acts of valor during the Civil War, both soldiers and sailors. The names of William Carney, Robert Smalls, John Lawson, Christian Fleetwood, Harriet Tubman and Susan King Taylor are but a few of those who will forever be associated with the black American's service to this nation during the Civil War.

meat. The Indians of the area referred to the black soldiers as "Buffalo Soldiers."

In spite of the constant conflict with cowboys (and others), the hostile climate and problems with enraged Indians who resented their enroachment of their lands, the morale of these black troops was very high and they enjoyed the lowest desertion rates of all Army units.

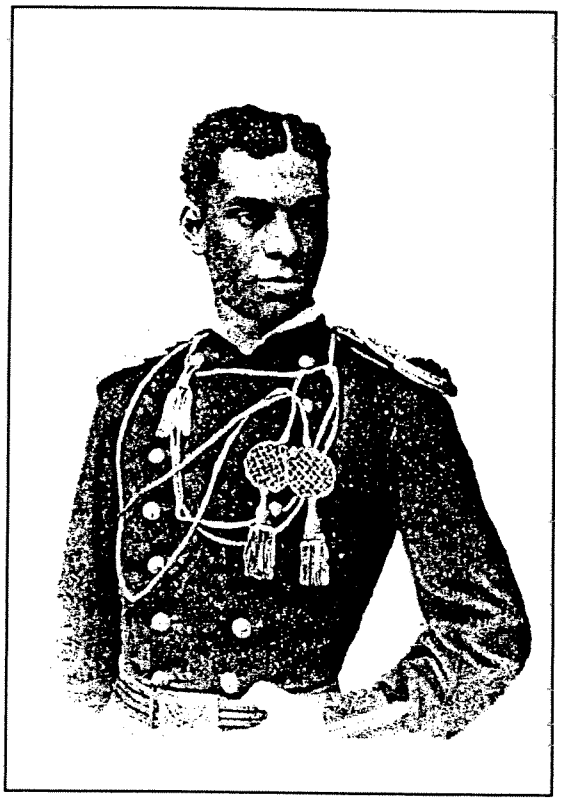
Frederic Remington's pen and ink sketch of a black cavalryman

In their more than one hundred battles with Indian warriors, for their bravery and valor, these "Buffalo Soldiers" won eighteen of the three hundred and seventy Medals of Honor awarded for this particular aspect of American conflict. First Sergeant Emanual Stance of the 9th Cavalry was the first American black to receive the Medal of Honor for acts of valor during the Indian Campaigns. In December of 1887, the body of First Sergeant Stance was found on the road to Crawford, Nebraska, with four bullet wounds in him. It was speculated that he had been the victim of his own men.

Except for Major Delaney who received his special commission from President Lincoln, the record indicates that no other black served as an officer in the Regular Army until 1877 when Henry Ossian Flipper graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point. It was no surprise that he was assigned to the Tenth Cavalry, one of the four black units remaining in the Army.

Lieutenant Flipper, a black officer in a unit that had been proclaimed to have all white officers, found himself under constant pressure during the four years he served with the unit. His insistence upon acting like an officer of the United States Army instead of a black officer who should have appreciated the honor of being an officer caused Flipper to be administratively discharged from the Army in 1881 for "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman."

In December of 1976, at the behest of the first black graduate from the United States Naval Academy, Commander Wesley A. Brown and historian Ray O. McCall, the circumstances surrounding Flipper's less than honorable discharge were reviewed and action was taken. An honorable discharge was issued in his name. In 1977, through the effort of Mr. H. Minton Francis (Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Equal Opportunity), the United States Military Academy dedicated a memorial bust and alcove in the cadet library in honor of Lieutenant Flipper on the 100th Anniversary of his graduation.

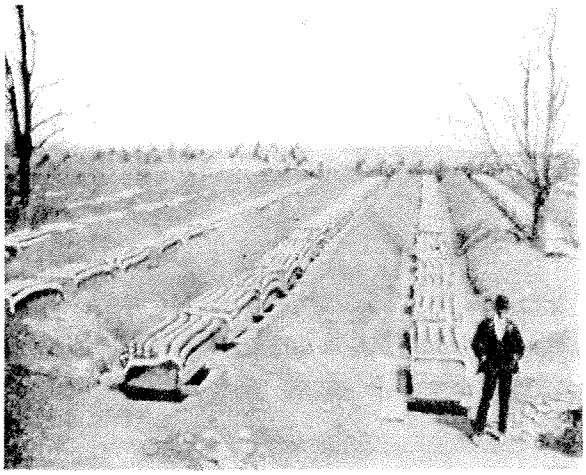


Second lieutenant Henry O. Flipper, first black to graduate from West Point

In disavowing any assertion that he had been party to negative reflections regarding black soldiers, General W. T. Sherman wrote to Secretary of War J. D. Cameron on March 1, 1877:

"...I have watched with deep interest the experiment of using black as a soldier made in the Army since the Civil War, and on several occasions been thrown in with them in Texas, New Mexico, and the plains. General Butler misconstrues me as opposed to the blacks as soldiers for I claim them equality in the ranks as in civil life...whereas they now constitute separate organizations with white officers. ... I advised the word "black" be obliterated from the statute book, and that Whites and blacks be enlisted and distributed alike in the army. (*National Archives*)

A Frederic Remington sketch of black calavrymen on the plains.



Interment of the victims of the "Maine" in Arlington National Cemetery

number of American blacks were convinced that an all-out patriotic effort would help the race win the respect of the American whites. In this war, as in those that had preceded it and those that would follow (except Korea and Vietnam), the black American would face numerous obstacles before he would be allowed to fight and die in the interest of his country.

Since blacks had generally been barred from entering the State militia units, several states had to organize volunteer units for them. The Third Alabama, the Third North Carolina, the Sixth Virginia, the Ninth Ohio, the Eighth Illinois and the Twenty-third Kansas Regiments were among the volunteer units that were organized in such manner. Due to the brevity of the ten-week war, only the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry and the Twenty-Fourth and Twenty-Fifth Infantry Regiments saw combat as black units.

Although Congress had authorized ten black regiments for this war, the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry and the Twenty-Fourth and Twenty-Fifth Infantry Regiments were in the war from the beginning. The Seventh and Eighth Regiments were organized in line with the authorization, but only the Ninth and Tenth Regiments survived the various reductions and reorganizations for any length of time.

In his Second Annual Message to Congress on December 5, 1898, President William McKinley reported to Congress that, "On the second (of July) El Caney and San Juan were taken after a desperate charge..." (Richardson's *Messages and Papers, etc* , Vol. X, p. 170.) No mention was made by the President with regard to which units were involved.

The publication stated that: "The Tenth Cavalry garnered honors at the Battle of Las Guasimas and at El Caney. The Twenty-Fifth Infantry also fought at El Caney, and the Twenty-Fourth Infantry helped in the assault on San Juan Hill." (p. 28)

While the Ninth and Tenth Regiments were (horse) cavalry, they are not seen in combat actions on their horses. That was because they came to Cuba on one ship and their horses were put aboard another. They were pressed into combat before their animals arrived; they therefore went into action and served as combat infantry troops.

As the short war came to a decisive end, black Johnny came marching home from a war on foreign soil for the first time. Of the fifty-two Medals of Honor that were awarded in the Spanish-American War, five were issued to black soldiers and one was awarded to a black sailor.

The issue of the black American in uniform continued to be highly con-

troversial. Perhaps one of the most widely acclaimed incidents involving black Americans is alleged to have occurred at Brownsville, Texas on the night and early morning of August 13 and 14, 1906. The incident grew out of reports that on August 12, black soldiers had pulled a white woman's hair, and that on August 12 and the following nights, shots were fired in town by black soldiers from three companies stationed outside of Brownsville.

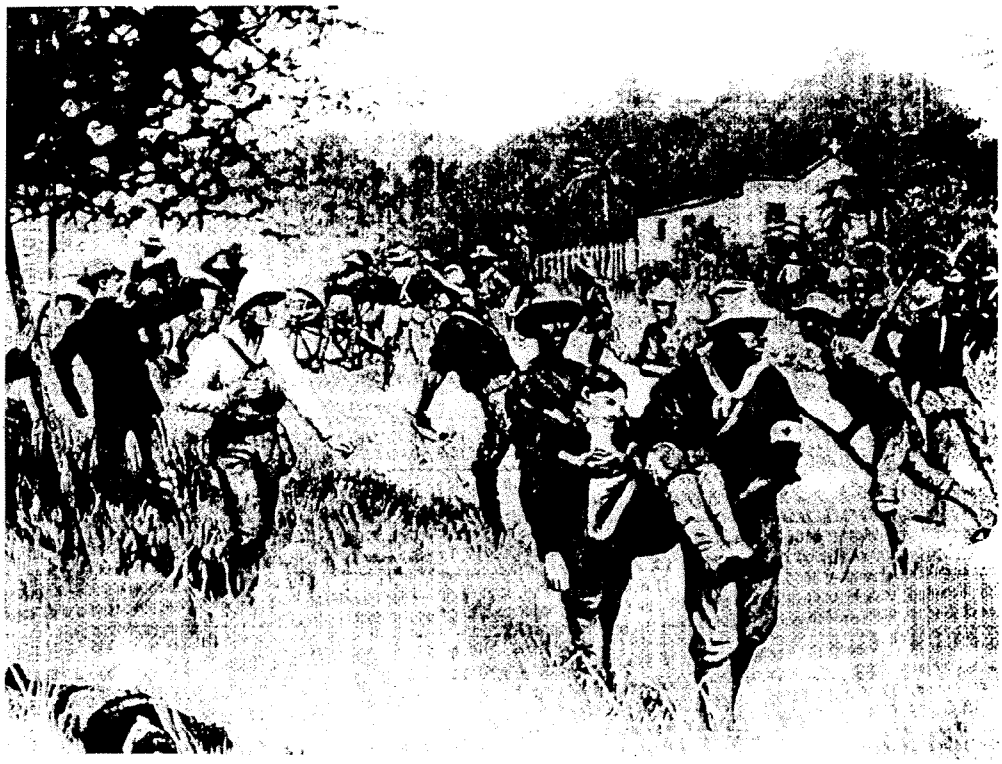
between President Roosevelt and Booker T. Washington.

Although Senators Joseph B. Foraker of Ohio and Morgan G. Bulkeley of Connecticut demonstrated that no soldiers of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry could have committed the Brownsville act, it was not until 1972 that the Army corrected the records and awarded honorable discharges in the names of the men.

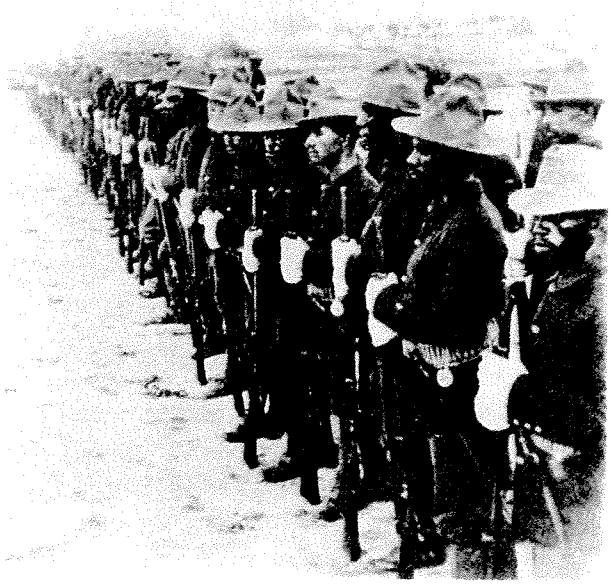
Black troops, under the command of Colonel Teddy Roosevelt, in action in the Spanish American War.

As the culmination of subsequent action, President "Teddy" Roosevelt ordered the administrative discharging of 167 men, of whom most had fought with him in Cuba. They were given the administrative discharges which were not categorized as dishonorable. They were however, barred from military reenlisting and from receiving any manner of military pensions. This caused the split

The black Americans who served in the United States Navy also played important parts in the Spanish-American War. While their feats were not as pronounced as those of the soldiers, it is a fact of history that the feats of Admiral Dewey were not as recognized as those of Colonel Teddy Roosevelt. As indicated previously, one black sailor did receive the Medal of Honor.



Members of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry Regiment in Cuba during the Spanish American War



Black veterans of the Spanish- American War

WORLD WAR I

(1914-1918)

When the United States issued its declaration of war against Germany on the 6th of April in 1917, the American black was once again put in a position to become involved in his/her continuing struggle to fight and die for those cherished ideals of democracy. Since this was the war "to make the world safe for democracy," what, then, could be better for this long denied black citizen than giving her/his all in the name of making democracy safe for all people.

President Abraham Lincoln had created the Bureau of Colored Troops (USCT) during the Civil War; the door had been partially opened for a few black males to acquire a measure of security and social recognition by becoming a part of the American military.

In spite of the reluctance of a number of this nation's blacks to initially become committed to the conflict, World War I afforded the blacks the rare opportunity to kill two birds with one stone: fight for democracy in an international war; and, expand the basis of their economic security and the social stability that the military offered.

Emmett J. Scott, Special Assistant to the Secretary of War (Newton D. Baker) for Negro Affairs wrote: "When the war against Germany was declared on April 6, 1917, Negro Americans quickly recognized the fact it was not to be a white man's war, nor a black man's war, but a war of all the people living under the Stars and Stripes for the preservation of human liberty throughout the world."

As a matter of fact, Dr. Scott was responding to German propaganda which had taken aim at the black discontent that had resulted from practices in race relations in this nation. One of their propaganda leaflets that was made available to blacks said in part:

> "Just what is democracy? Personal Freedom, all people enjoying the same rights socially and before the law. Do you enjoy the same rights as the white people in America, the land of freedom and democracy, or are you treated ... as second-class citizens? Can you get a seat in the theater where the white people sit? Can you go into a restaurant where white people dine? ... Is lynching and the most horrible crimes connected therewith a lawful proceeding in a Democratic country?
>
> "Why, then, fight the Germans only for the benefit of the Wall Street robbers and to protect the millions they have loaned to the British, French and Italians?"

These propagandists made it a point to comment on each of the lynchings of a black person with the remark: **"THIS LYNCHING WAS NOT MADE IN GERMANY"**

The black American, although disturbed by the messages being received from the enemy, gave his loyalty to the United States, and there were not many who thought differently. In his famous "close ranks" editorial in *The Crisis,* W. E. B. DuBois said to the black Americans: "First your country, then your rights."

These units were brought up to full strength for the war, generally doubling them in size, and 367,710 blacks were also drafted. Of this number, most of them saw no combat duty in Europe. A pressing need for black officers was quite evident during this time. At the outset, there were very few black officers. Six hundred thirty nine black officers graduated from officer training school and were commissioned at Fort Dodge, Des Moines, Iowa on October 14, 1917.

One hundred forty thousand black soldiers were in France during World War I; 40,000 of them saw actual combat.

Tradition had always adhered to the policy started during the Civil War that no black unit larger than a regiment be formed. Tradition, however, was broken when on November 29, 1917, the War Department authorized the creation of the first black division, the 92nd Division. The 365th, 366th, 367th and 368th Infantry Regiments were designated the core of this division.

Due to the fear of having too many black soldiers in any one place in the country, the 92nd Division was scattered out in seven different locations across the nation. It never came together as a division until one brief moment in France. Even then, its core units were assigned to the French 2nd and 4th Armies.

Nevertheless, the units of this division compiled an excellent combat record, in both valor, and objectives achieved. Most of its officers were black. Fourteen black officers and forty-three enlisted men at the Division level were cited for bravery and awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Combat units of this black division consisted of two brigades, four infantry regiments, three field artillery regiments, one engineer regiment, three machine gun battalions, one field signal battalion, one supply train, one ammunition train, one sanitary train and one military police unit.

The successes of the 92nd Division led the War Department to envision a second black division: the 93rd. Just as the 92nd had its four core infantry regiments, the 369th, 370th, 371st and 372nd Infantry Regiments were designated as the core of this division.

However, unlike the 92nd Division, the 93rd was not actually formed at this time. The four infantry regiments were, instead, assigned to the French command and that is how they fought throughout the war.

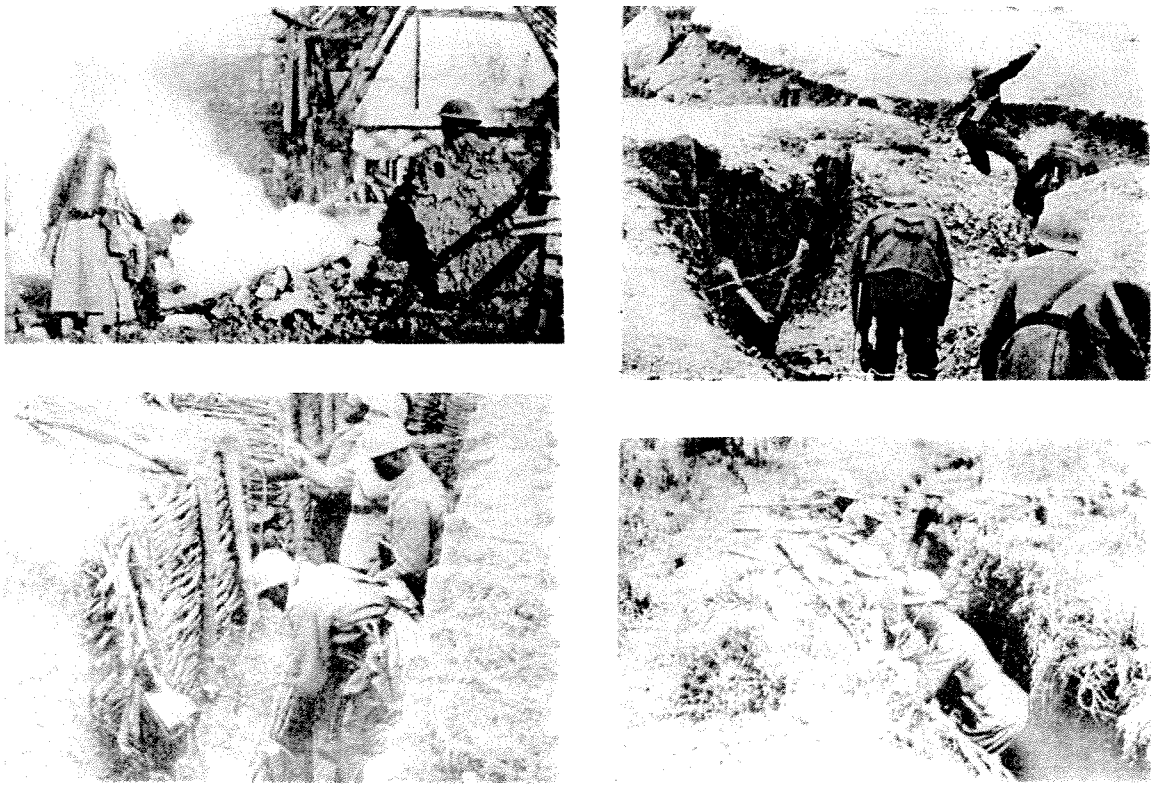
One of these regiments, the 369th, became the most famous and well-known of any black unit in the war. Its Henry Johnson was the first American, black or white, to receive France's Croix de Guerre. His heroics became legendary. Johnson's act of valor was acknowledged by former President, "Teddy" Roosevelt, who included Alvin York and eight others in his book of World War I heroes. Another of those so honored by Mr. Roosevelt was Parker Dunn who, like Johnson, was from Albany, New York.

One hundred seventy officers and men of the 369th were awarded the French Croix de Guerre or the Legion of Honor; twenty one officers and men of the 370th were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and 68 of its men were awarded the Croix de Guerre.

The 371st also compiled a commendable record. Ten black officers and 12 enlisted men received the Distinguished Service Cross. Thirty four black officers and 89 enlisted men received the Croix de Guerre, and one officer received the French Legion of Honor.

The 372nd, overseas only ten months, also compiled a record in evidence of its service. One of its officers and 23 of its enlisted men are identified as having been awarded the Croix de Guerre. One black sailor, Seaman Edward Donohue of Houston, Texas won the French Croix de Guerre for action aboard the *USS Mount Vernon* when it was torpedoed off the coast of Cherbourg.

Initial acknowledgements on the performance of black soldiers in World War I were full of praise and glory. However, as the records of performance of these soldiers were taken as the basis for what use to make of blacks in the event of another war, many of those who had given the blacks glowing reports changed their opinions. The record, however, stands for itself.

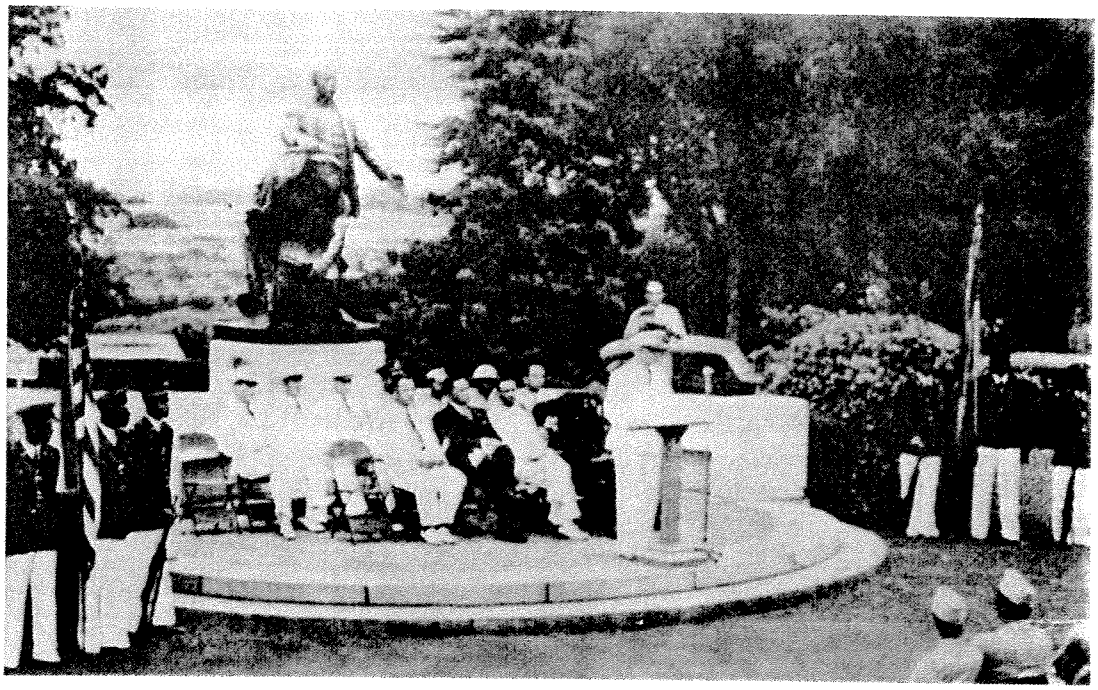


Black soldiers in combat action in France during World War I. Most of these soldiers fought alongside French soldiers, under the French command, using French weapons and equipment.

strapped with the image that "a Negro serviceman is still a Negro."

That position was challenged by many who had the credentials to speak authoritatively on the subject. The armed services mentality held fast to its assertion that the American military had a military function; it was not a sociological testing ground. It soon became obvious that such position was not going to change any time in the near future.

In the face of these assertions, blacks were becoming more and more convinced that in the event of further military conflict, the Army would contrive to limit or restrict them to labor units. The one sure thing that came out of the assertions was that there definitely would be no place for black officers. The general contention was that the ineffectiveness of the black officer had made it impossible for black troops to function appropriately.



With the statue of Booker T. Washington in the background, Major General Walter R. Weaver delivers the inaugural address for the opening of the Air Corps School at Tuskagee, Alabama, for training black pilots and support personnel.

For example, the Army had "assessed the worth and value of the Negro as a combat soldier," and it had determined that his future as a combat soldier was at best low-level. The black soldier had been marked for service-type assignments.

In 1919, Columbia University President Nicholas Murray Butler put forth a resolution praising black soldiers of World War I with the statement that, "No American soldier saw harder or more constant fighting and none gave better accounts of themselves. When fighting

was to be done, this regiment (the 369th) was there." (*The Independent and Harper's Weekly,* XCVII, February 26, 1919, p. 286)

Numerous others joined in with Mr. Butler in praising black soldiers who had paraded so pridefully down New York City's Fifth Avenue, but their accolades were muted by others. In 1925, Major General Robert L. Bullard, Commander of the American Second Army, wrote in his memoirs: "If you need combat soldiers, and especially if you need them in a hurry, do not put your time upon Negroes. If racial uplift is your purpose, that is another matter." (Major General Robert L. Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences of War,* New York: Doubleday Page, 1925, Chapter XXX.)

Other memoirs of a similar nature followed those of General Bullard and doubts about the future of blacks having careers in the American military. With regard to General Bullard's letter, there were voices of dissent. General Ballou, Commander of the (black) 92nd Division attempted to set the record straight when he wrote of the mitigating circumstances that contributed to the difficulty associated with black officers. He wrote:

"The Secretary of War gave personal attention to the selection of white officers of the highest grades, and evidently intended to give the (92nd) Division the advantage of good white officers. This policy was not continued by the War Department. The 92nd was made the dumping ground for discards, both white and black. Some of the latter were officers who had been eliminated as inefficient from the so-called 93rd Division.

"...College degrees were required for admission to the white camp, but only high school educations were required for the colored, many of these high school educations would have been a disgrace to any grammar school." (Excerpts of letter

President Franklin D. Roosevelt made history when he organized his "black cabinet" to deal with affairs affecting black people. Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, a black female, was prominent among the members of that organization.

to Assistant Commandant, General Staff, Army War College, March 14, 1920, *National Archives.*)

Further reductions in the Army resulted in the overstaffing of black units with black non-commissioned officers because there was no other place for them to go. When elements of the Tenth Cavalry and the 25th Infantry were broken up to supply blacks for the Air Corps which did not enlist blacks, there was a loud protest from the black community. General George Van Horn Moseley, Deputy Chief of Staff responded to the protest by stating that "In the adjustment of our military program, the fact is there just isn't enough Army to go around."

The problem of the employment and deployment of black troops continued to be a problem for Army planners. They developed the 1922 Plan which called for 10.37 percent of the Army to be black. Then there was the 1937 Plan which specified that blacks would have to be included in any mobilization plan. This resulted in the creation of the Mobilization Regulations which identified the names of Army units to which blacks would be assigned and the number of blacks to be assigned to each of those units.

As the clouds of war and war itself darkened the European continent, the American posture became one in which it was no longer a question of whether or not blacks would be utilized in the nation's war effort, but how many would be utilized and where would they be deployed?

Mobilization Regulations set the percentage of black troops from each of the Mobilization Corps Areas as follows:

First Corps Area	1.26 percent
Second Corps Area	4.26 percent
Third Corps Area	11.25 percent
Fourth Corps Area	33.37 percent
Fifth Corps Area	6.45 percent
Sixth Corps Area	4.25 percent
Seventh Corps Area	5.58 percent
Eighth Corps Area	10.52 percent
Ninth Corps Area	1.03 percent

It was at this point that the country began to concentrate its energies on the expansion of the military in the preparation for war. The long history of racial discrimination came to the surface as blacks began to make demands for better opportunities in the military as well as in the war production industry. W.E.B. DuBois spoke with regret about his Close Ranks editorial during World War I.

The Daily Worker was attempting to create apathy among this nation's blacks on the basis of the discrimination they faced. A. Philip Randolph was to threaten and plan his March on Washington for a greater share of the war preparation economics for blacks. Chandler Owens was to prepare a paper on *The Negroes and the War* in an attempt to encourage blacks to more fully support the war preparation effort.

President Roosevelt would sign Executive Order 8802, providing for equal opportunity in the war effort. The Selective Service Draft had been initiated and its Manpower Regulations had decreed that racial discrimination would not be

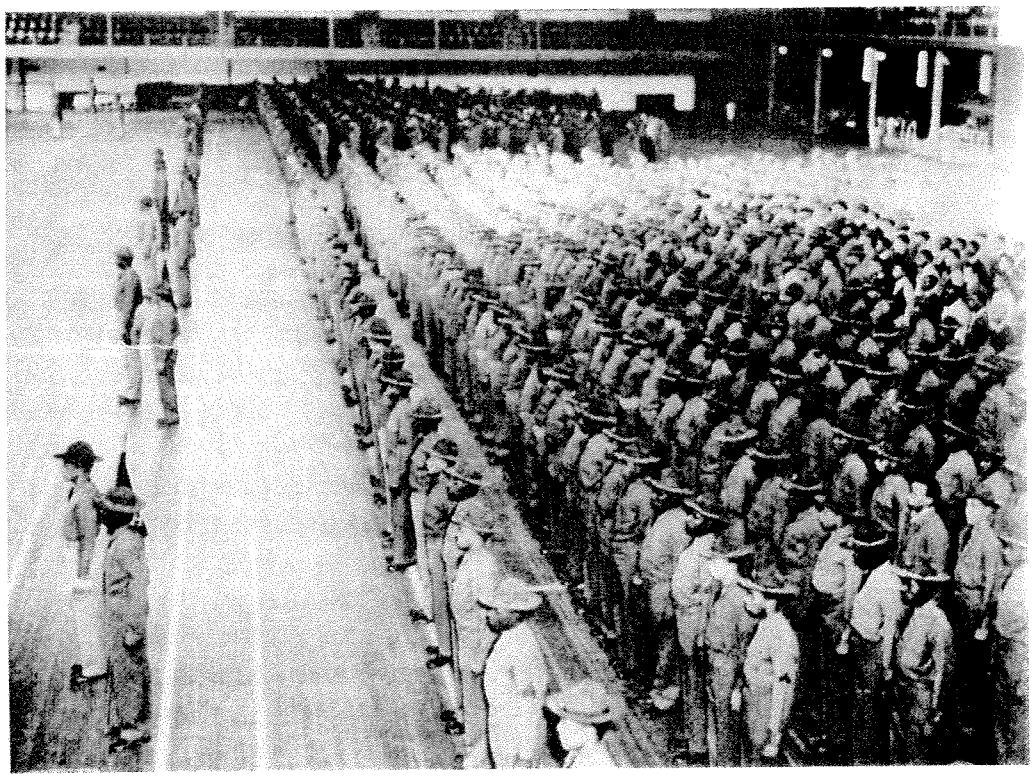
acceptable. World Heavyweight Boxing Champion Joe Louis would go into the Army and proclaim, "We're gonna win -- because we're on God's side."

The Navy and the Marines had opened their doors to blacks through the draft, even though the Navy's blacks could only serve in the messman branch and those in the Marines would get combat training to perform service functions under racially-segregated conditions.

On April 30, 1940, Congressman Hamilton Fish had the statement inserted into the Congressional Record that: "Ninety-nine and one-half percent of American Negroes are loyal American citizens."

On October 25, 1940, Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Sr. of New York's 369th Regiment was appointed this nation's first black General of the Regular Army. In August of 1939, there were 3,640 blacks in the Army, but by November 30, 1941, that figure was 97,725. One year after the Pearl Harbor attack, there were 467,833 blacks in the Army.

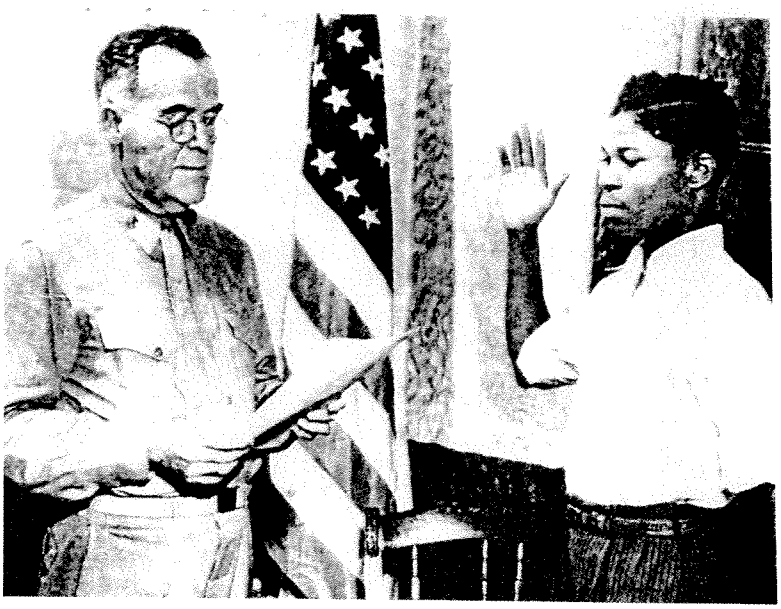
Perhaps the most profound aspect of the expansion program that brought hundreds of thousands of blacks into uniform was the advent of blacks in the Signal Corps, the Air Corps and most notably, blacks in combat pilot training at Tuskegee, Alabama.



The all black 369th National Guard Regiment was mustered into the regular army eleven months before Pearl Harbor.

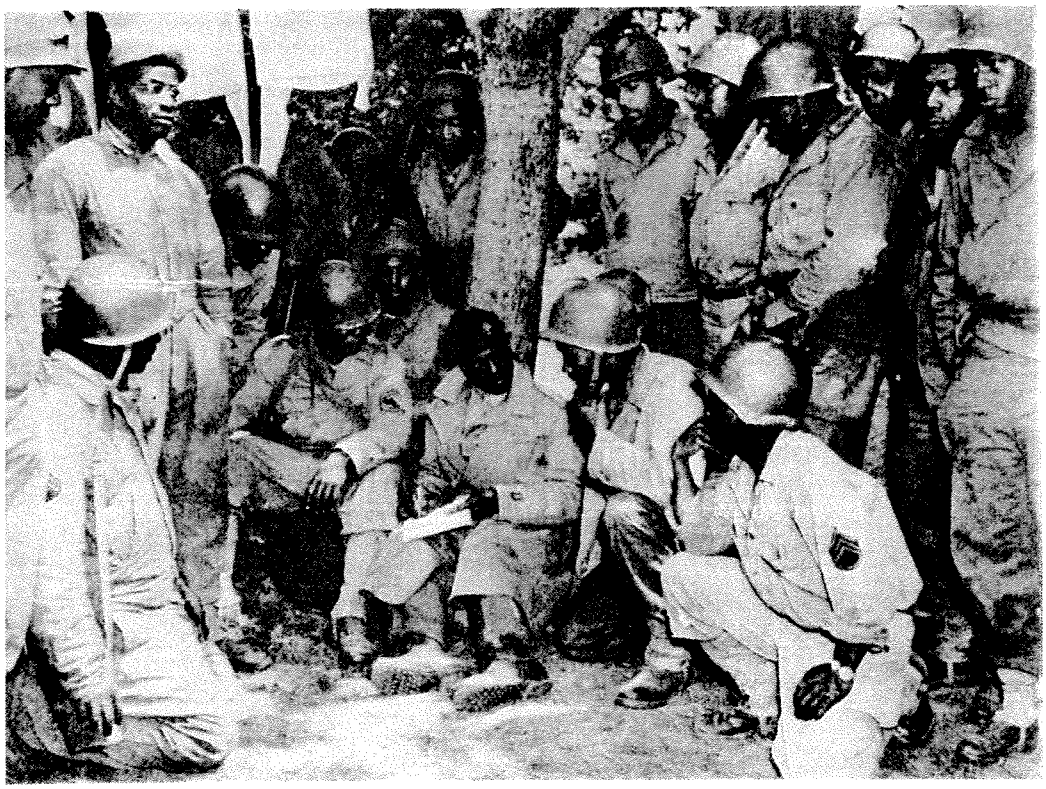
Lt. Gen. M. J. Savlan, Commanding General of a Russian Tank Corps, presents the **Order of the Soviet Union, 1st Class,** *to Sgt. Marcon H. Johnson of the 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, 3rd US Army, at ceremonies held in Czechoslavakia.*

Soldiers from Quartermaster Truck Company being presented Bronze Star Medals by Brigadier General John L. Pierce



Former dogcatcher George Thompson of Nashville, Tennessee, becomes the first black Marine recruit.

Black combat soldiers are pinned down by enemy fire in Europe in 1945.



Black war correspondent speaks with black combat corpsmen in France, 1944.

sibilities in the South that required higher levels of education that many of them had been able to acquire.

Those practices resulted in low morale on the part of Northern blacks and low performance on the part of Southern blacks. Since assessments did not take these and other facts into account, the black soldier was subjected to an unfair assessment.

Perhaps the prime example was the black fighter pilots who were introduced into combat flying the outdated P-40. They destroyed a total of 261 enemy aircraft and damaged 158. They flew a total of 1578 missions with the 12th and 15th Air Forces. They received 95 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 14 Bronze Stars, 744 Air Force Clusters, one Legion of Merit, one Silver Star, two Soldier Medals and eight Purple Hearts. Of the 992 pilots who graduated from this training center, 450 were sent overseas and 66 were killed in action. They were accorded the praise of never having lost an American bomber to enemy aircraft when they were flying escort service for bombing missions deep into Europe.

Yet, a memorandum from the Director of the Special Planning Division to the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces wrote on May 23, 1945 stated:

"The overseas performance of the Negro Air service group was unsatisfactory." (Nalty and McGregor, *Blacks in the Military: Essential Documents,* p. 177.)

In an earlier reference to the above, the memorandum had stated, "The Negro combat flying units performed creditably--limited by the lack of initiative on the part of Negro pilots and the unsatisfactory maintenance of aircraft." (*ibid.*)

The Navy Paper (48-46) had spelled out specifically that: "(1) Effective immediately, all restrictions governing the types of restrictions placed on Negro Naval personnel are eligible to be lifted. (2) Henceforth they shall be eligible for all types of assignments in all ratings in all activities and all ships of the naval service. ...(4) In the utilization of housing, messing, and other facilities, no special or unusual provisions will be made for the accommodation of the Negro."

The Marine Corps, while under the Navy, was exempt from the provisions of Paper 48-46, but it was stated by the Navy that the Marine Corps which had 17,135 blacks in its ranks at that time would reduce that number to 4,800. In its integration plan, the Navy had stated that ships shall have no more than ten percent black personnel assigned. The Marine Corps had placed all of its organizational functions into nine basic categories, with the stipulation that no category shall have more than ten percent blacks among its personnel.

The segregationist policies of the armed services were under attack from all quarters of the black community. Paramount in the minds of blacks was the idea that they would not be arbitrarily dismissed from the services now that the war had ended. They were also concerned that those blacks remaining would not be restricted to service-type duties.

An August 6, 1948 memo from General Omar Bradley to General W. S. Paul stated that, "Present Negro strength of the Department of the Army is

62,000... This represents 12 percent of the army strength which is above the level established by the Gillem Board (ten percent)."

At another point the memo stated, "The army is popular with Negroes as evidenced by the Negro strength, in spite of quotas and AGCT (Army General Classification Tests) limitations. The ten percent policy is understood by all. Segregation after enlistment is the crux of the problem." (General Bradley, *Ibid.*)

With regard to the integrated Navy, a disproportionate number of blacks was still in the messman branch. Dispersement of blacks and greater utilization of them in the expansion of the Air Force also became items of concern in this newest branch of the American military.

On July 26, 1948, President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9981 which proclaimed: "(Whereas) it is essential that there be maintained in the armed services of the United States the highest standards of democracy, with equality of treatment and opportunity for all who serve in our country's defense, ..." The President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services was established as a result.

To that end, President Truman appointed Charles Fahy chairman of the committee. Fahy's task was to lead the committee in determining ways to implement the new policy on equality of treatment and opportunity. Fahy announced that his first mission would be to purge the armed forces of segregation and quotas. President Truman agreed for each branch of the service to superintend its own procedure of providing for the implementation of Executive Order 9981 without outside interference. The Fahy Committee, as it was called, retained its charge to make sure that implementation was brought about in an effective manner.

Its first action in this regard was to make recommendations to the Navy. It then took a look at the recently created Air Force and gave it some direction. Since the Air Force as a separate branch of the American military was new, the task of recommending some appropriate steps was somewhat easier.

The committee's next step was to once again take a look at the Navy in which Secretary Johnson had succeeded Secretary Forestal. Forestal seemed to have been inclined to favor complete integration and equality of opportunity and treatment to a greater degree than Secretary Johnson. After some initial conflict, the Navy program began to proceed. This time the Marine Corps was included.

The Committee took its longest and most comprehensive look at the Army. Realizing that the Army was the largest of the military branches and generally the least selective of its members, the Fahy Committee took great pains to bring about compliance with the President's Order. As a matter of fact, so much attention was given to the Army that many thought that the Fahy Committee was dealing exclusively with the Army.

As equality of opportunity and treatment in the military began to emerge more as a concept of reality, the effects of its meaning and implications reached into the National Guard, the Reserves and the various ROTC units. It was not

The integration of the armed forces meant that there would be no more black air corps flying units such as this bomber crew.

realized at that time, but the "new" American military would soon be called upon to take its first test in Korea.

Complete integration of the armed forces had mandated, even though inadvertently, that the black units of the past would be gone forever. This meant that there would be no more black 99th Fighter Squadron, no black 332nd Group and no more black truck battalions and companies, anti-aircraft units, infantry divisions and black sections on military bases.

It also meant that blacks would no longer be automatically assigned to service-type units. It also meant that in the event of further military conflict, blacks would begin to share a more equitable proportion of battle casualties. If this was to be the price for equality of treatment and opportunity, blacks entering the "new" military service would be willing to pay that price.

In June of 1949, there were 106 black units still in existence. However, one year later, that number had decreased to only 24 units. In a like manner, in July of 1949, some 14,609 blacks were assigned to black units. By May of 1950, that number had been reduced to 4,675.

THE KOREAN CONFLICT

(1950-1953)

Five months after the Fahy Committee had presented its conclusions, elements of the Chinese Army swarmed into South Korea and the United States had entered another war. The January 1950 Fahy Committee Report had done much to provide for the integration of the American military, and for the implementation of its provisions of equality of opportunity and treatment. It had, however, left the revamped American military in no position to respond to a situation involving combat with an enemy who had all of the manpower it needed.

The three-year-old Air Force with its integrated personnel was hardly in a position to mount an effective response. The integrating Army was somewhere between complete integration and racial segregation. In a sense, "it was caught with its pants down." The black soldier was therefore forced to enter another war in some similar aspects of his condition when he entered the last war: segregated units, poorly trained soldiers, low morale and inadequately prepared to give a good and effective account of himself.

With the no quota mandate from the Fahy Committee, the determination of the number of blacks to be recruited was indeed a problem. The inability to muster full strength under such conditions caused much debate over what the policy should be with regard to the employment and deployment of black troops. In the face of this problem, the Fahy Committee insisted upon continuing the process of integration that had begun, emergency or no emergency.

It boiled down to a point where it was more practical to maintain integrated military bases than try to keep them separated by race. It was also found to be easier to maintain front-line positions with the best troops by combining elements of black and white units into integrated units under a unified command. This situation did not lend itself to large numbers of troops.

Some things did change when both black and white troops were sent to Japan in order to prepare for the situation in Korea. As the fighting escalated, white

Col. Frank E. Petersen, Jr., a Marine Corps combat fighter pilot, completes a mission in Korea. Col. Petersen became a three star general.

combat units began to take many casualties. It was indeed unpopular for military commanders to replace white killed and wounded with other whites, as had always been the practice before the advent of equality of opportunity and treatment.

The only alternative was to have black troops and black units fill in the gaps that had been created by white casualties. Thus, integration was being implemented in a manner that had not been imagined in the past.

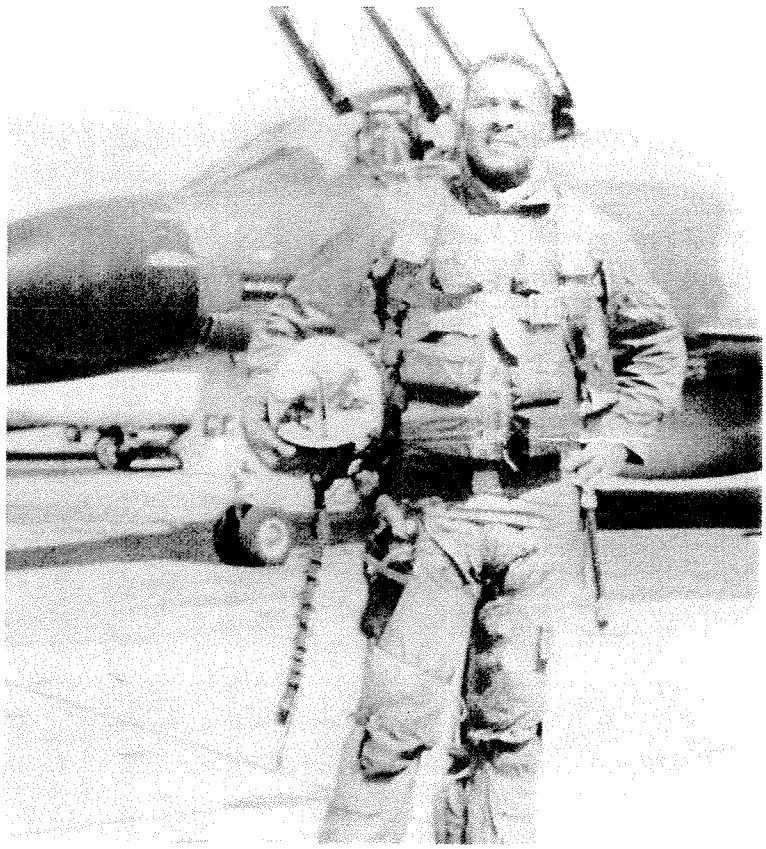
While racial integration of the military was taking place in Asia, that was not the case in Europe where there were large numbers of black and white troops. In effect, the black American was in three American armies at the same time. The one in Asia was basically integrated; the one in the United States was integrating; the one in Europe was still segregated.

Under the pressure of the Korean War, integration of the Air Force went quite smoothly. Former (black) Air Force Lieutenant Charles E. Francis, in his book, *The Tuskegee Airmen*, stated:

"The integration program progressed beyond the hope of the most optimistic exponent of integration. To a large extent, those who were reassigned to white units were received at their new bases as American soldiers and given assignments according to their abilities. Black officers and enlisted men were given the same privileges as whites and treated, as individuals rather than as a race." (page 235)

Twenty-one black pilots from the 99th and the 332nd and hundreds of black enlisted men served commendably with the Army Air Force in Korea. Lieutenant James Harvey, Jr, a former 99th fighter pilot was one of the first American pilots to see action as a jet pilot in Korea. (Then Major) Daniel "Chappie" James who had served as a Tuskegee flyer during World War II, distinguished himself as a fighter pilot during the Korean War.

PFC William Thompson was awarded the Medal of Honor for valor in

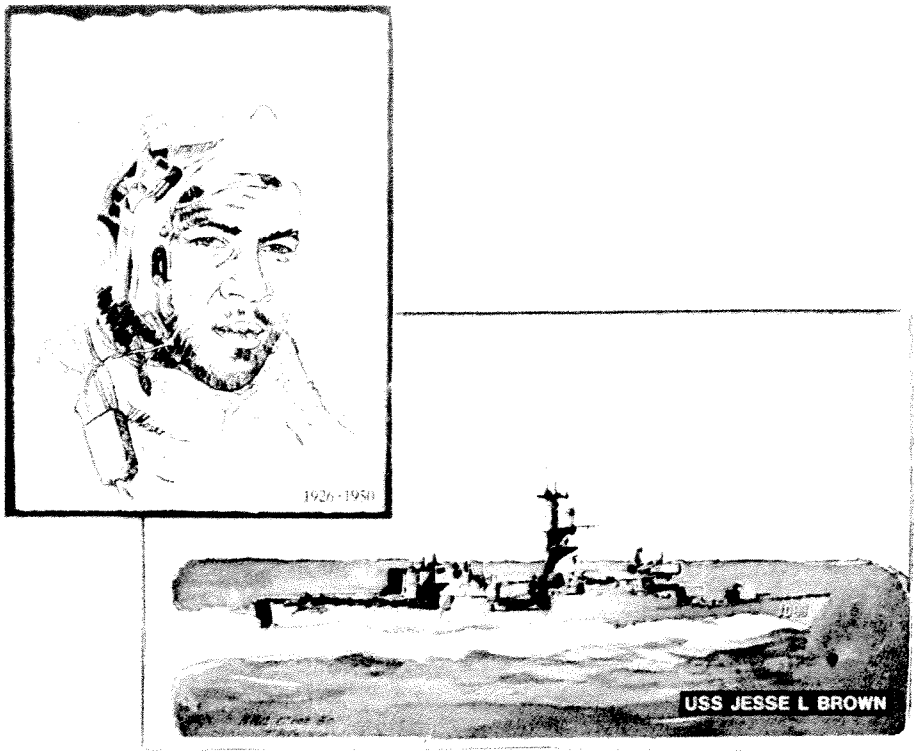


Colonel (later General) Daniel "Chappie" James, who flew many combat missions during the Korean conflict, completes a combat mission in Viet Nam.

the Korean War. He became the first black American to be so honored since the Spanish-American War in 1898. Sergeant Cornelius H. Charlton was the other black American who received the Medal of Honor in Korea.

The black American in the military served well in Korea, proving beyond any element of doubt that he could fight as well as the white American in the military. While the Fahy Committee had recommended the immediate integration of the Army, many blacks will argue that the need for military manpower was the real key to the smooth, hasty and effective integration of the Army.

The record of the integrated services in Korea spoke for itself, and it assured the nation and the world that the racially segregated American military was a thing of the past. Other branches of the American military also showed that the totally integrated American military was much more effective.



Ensign Jesse L. Brown, the first black navy combat pilot, was killed when he was shot down by enemy ground fire in Korea.

would make things difficult in the next war.

The war clouds that usually gather to alert a nation that a new war is possible were giving subtle hints, but everyone seemed to have felt that if they were ignored, the threat of war would go away. Things were relatively quiet in the military, and it was not all due to the integration that was taking place. Many of the career military men, both black and white, who had entered the service during World War II and had preferred to remain, were nearing the period of completion for their twenty-year hitches. They were, therefore, quiet. All they wanted to do was to serve their time and come home. These men had seen the military as a means of economic survival, and they were ready to return to civilian life and use the GI Bill to pursue other life objectives.

Many blacks felt comfortable with the military, expressing a belief that there was no way to go except up. President Truman's Executive Order 9981 had been reinforced by President Eisenhower; the United States Supreme Court had decreed an end to racially-segregated education in the public schools; and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had been the most sweeping and far-reaching edict in the interest of citizenship rights for blacks that the nation had ever witnessed.

Black officers were in each branch of the military, and a full civil rights drive was underway in every nook and cranny of the nation. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had emerged as a respected black leader and Southern National Guardsmen had been used to ensure the protection of black children in school integration efforts. The Navy had a black admiral and the Army had black generals.

Many blacks would remain in the military service for the obvious reasons of economic security, social prestige and opportunities for advancement through the learning of a trade or profession. Brenede and Parson stated:

"Historically, black Americans have always served their country well; they have fought in every American war. For the most part, their motivation in serving came from an ardent desire to prove themselves as worthy citizens. They believed that since military service ranked so high among American ideals, their participation would earn them respect, personal freedom from discrimination, and benefits accorded other groups of Americans." (Joel Osler Brende and Erwin Randolph Parson, *Vietnam Veterans,The Road to Recovery,* New York: New American Library, 1985, p. 168).

Many blacks, therefore, thought that by becoming members of the military they could dodge the full impact of discrimination and segregation. This, of course, necessitated a commitment to war or any other military activity in the event of such.

Maj. Gen. Frederic E. Davison, Army

Brig. Gen. "Chappie" James, Air Force

LEFT: Rear Admiral Samuel L. Gravely, Jr., Navy

RIGHT: Brigadier General Cunningham C. Bryant, National Guard

During and after the Korean War, many blacks were promoted to higher levels.

Black and white soldiers in integrated military units were used to protect civil rights marchers along the route from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. Members of these units were also used to help restore and maintain order during the period of this nation's crisis in racial conflict.

in the nation as a whole constituted only eleven percent of the nation's population.

Those figures resulted in a changed concept by this nation's blacks. The old saying had been: "It's a rich man's war, but a poor man's fight." Disproportionate casualties among blacks led them to say, "It's a white man's war, but it's a black man's fight." This was just one element of the attitude that blacks had about the war in Vietnam, which they did not express to the same extent about any other war.

Dr. Martin Luther King, an avowed critic of the Vietnam War, said of blacks fighting in that war, "We are taking young black men who have been crippled by our society and sending them 8,000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they have not found in Southwest Georgia or in East Harlem." (Harold Bryant, "*The Black Veteran,*" *Stars and Stripes-The National Tribune*, June, 1983, p. 5.).

Although soldiers are in the business of killing, they must be motivated to do their jobs. Such motivation might be simple patriotism or it might be in evidence of some other belief or ideal. Dr. Charles Moskos spoke of the soldier's "patriotism or belief that he is fighting for a just cause, the effective soldier is ultimately an ideologically inspired soldier." (Brende and Parson, p. 169.)

During the period of time between 1965 and 1967, black soldiers in Vietnam believed that they were fighting for a just cause, and their morale was high. However, the assassination of Dr. King in 1968 changed things. Black soldiers became angry and demoralized. Their morale reached a new low, matching their discontent with serving in that war. For their own reasons, many whites also expressed discontent about fighting in the Vietnam War. Hundreds who were not able to avoid the draft left the country for Canada and other places in order to stay out of the war.

The 1984 Vietnam Veterans *Report of the National Working Group on Black Vietnam Veterans*, stated that:

> "Many of the most affluent members of society who did not fail their physicals were able to secure deferments or able to secure special assignments as officers in the Air Force, Navy and Coast Guard to avoid Vietnam combat. The fighting in Vietnam was thus on the shoulders of a disproportionate number of blacks and other minorities, as well as on the shoulders of indigent white Americans."

Project 100,000, the Johnson Administration's effort to draft 100,000 youths who might otherwise have gone to prison or be totally excluded from the opportunity to secure a better economic future, seems to have been motivated by noble and humane ideals, but its implementation proved not to be in the best interest of blacks, other minorities and indigent white Americans. It therefore failed. Those who chose to go to Vietnam went for reasons of patriotism, family pressure, anticipated excitement, revenge over the war death of a loved one, help to refine an identity in life, escape boredom, define their masculinity or they had no choice but to go. (Brende and Parsons, p. 171.)

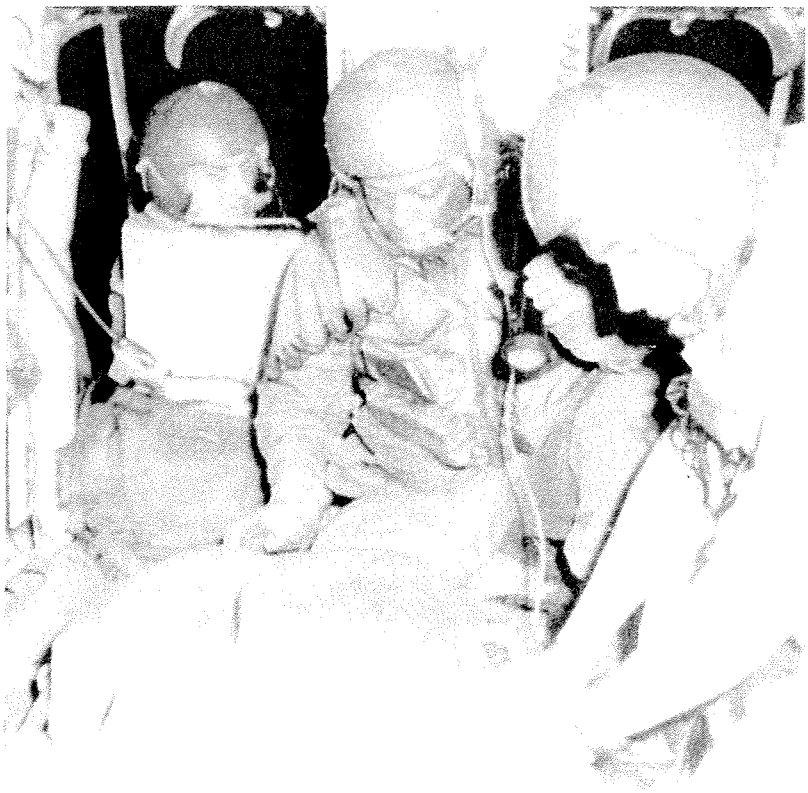
Many factors combined with the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert F. Kennedy to undercut the black American's motivation to fight in Vietnam. Paramount among these were the statistics that

showed blacks to be much more likely to be sent to Vietnam and most likely to be in high-risk combat units. The growth of black pride and nationalism was also a major cause for some reluctance to want to give their lives in the Vietnam War.

Racial incidents in the military became common as the war continued. For example, forty black soldiers marched on the commanding general's headquarters at Chu Lai in 1971 and demanded an end to discrimination. There was a week-long racial war at Da Nang in 1971. A race riot broke out at Camp Baxter near the Demilitarized Zone.

Some one-hundred and sixty racial incidents occurred at the Marine Base of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in 1969, and four days of racial rioting occurred at Travis Air Force Base in California in 1970. Racial disturbances between black and white military personnel also took place in Hawaii.

The Navy also had its racial problem. The chief cause of racial problems in the Navy was the fact that almost all blacks were in low-level jobs, with little or no hope of progress or advancement. By the middle of 1970, the Navy had only 0.7 percent black officers in its ranks. The aircraft carriers *Kitty Hawk*, *Constellation*, and *Franklin D. Roosevelt* experienced severe racial conflict until Admiral Zumwalt took necessary steps to relieve the tension. His task was made difficult by the fact that as the Army began to pull some of its troops out of combat in Vietnam, the Navy and the Air Force were called upon to fill in the gaps. These were not simply black problems; both blacks and whites responded to them.



Helicopter crew tends wounded sailor whom they rescued in Vietnam waters.

In the midst of these racial problems, provocative whites are said to have burned KKK-type crosses and flew Confederate flags when and where they greatly outnumbered blacks.

This conflict and dissatisfaction did not mean that black Americans refused to give their all during the Vietnam War effort. Black soldiers, sailors and marines fought as regular combat personnel on the ground, on the sea and in the air throughout the duration

of the conflict, and they fought bravely. Many black officers went on to distinguish themselves in that war in their commitment to duty, acts of valor and leadership qualities. Some of these were officers who had also distinguished themselves in Korea. Several of them rose in the ranks to become generals and admiral grade officers. By the end of the Vietnam War, there were twelve black generals in the Army, three in the Air Force and one black admiral in the Navy.

Of the 277 Medals of Honor awarded in the Vietnam War, a total of 20 went to blacks in the Army and the Marine Corps. A number of blacks earned other military honors and medals. During the Vietnam War, the American black received what he had sought since the time of this nation's first war: equality of opportunity on the battlefield. There is no question that blacks and whites will fight and die together as Americans in any future military conflicts involving this nation. Members of both races will join other Americans and serve in leadership positions as well as in other capacities.

The figures that follow, compiled two years before the Vietnam War ended, show the early status of the black American in that war.

Participation:

Service: All

Totals: 373,087

Blacks: 41,770

Killed:

Service: All

Totals: 44,888

Blacks: 5,570

Total Military Service:

Service: All

Totals: 2,793,024

Blacks: 275,827

Air Force pilots plan a strike against the enemy in Vietnam.

POST - VIETNAM ERA

(1973 - PRESENT)

Many changes had taken place in the American military by the time that the Vietnam War came to an end in 1973. The changes were substantive and visible. They were reflected in the manner that black and white service persons viewed each other, and they were reflected in the nature of the individuals who were members of the military. Those differences were also reflected in the absence of segregation and blatant discrimination that had always been a factor of this nation's armed services.

One paramount factor in the nature of the changes was due to the fact that the Nixon administration decided to replace the Selective Service System with an all-volunteer military. This 1973 decision resulted in a new feeling by those who would become members of the American military. Instead of seeing themselves as helpless victims of the "system," they thought in terms of making the military a career of free choice. Gone was the obligation to serve in the military because they had to defend their country.

The racial friction that had plagued the military during the Vietnam war, and had been so prevalent throughout the history of the military began to become a thing of the past. It had become obvious that black and white soldiers who could fight and die side by side under the same conditions and circumstances realized that they could also live side by side, at least in the military. In his book, *The Military: More Than Just a Job?*, Frank Wood said, "Those who worked against the (military) system were mustered out and replaced by those who chose the military as a career move,..." He continued, "...the morale among the soldiers improved and race relations became less an issue and less of a point of contention."

The all-volunteer force resulted in more enlistments. The idea that there would be more enlistments and perhaps "too many of them" would be black was one of the strongest bones of contention against the possibility of an all-volunteer force when it was initially discussed as a possibility. The (Thomas S.) Gates Committee studied the potential problem in great detail and reported to the President that a volunteer army would not be "overrun" with blacks. He reassured the President that the percentage of blacks in the voluntary army would remain somewhat close to the percentage that prevailed at that time.

Mr. Gates' prediction was not accurate for the immediate period following the new era. The black percentage in the Army went from twelve percent in 1968 to 32 percent in 1979. This drastic increase caused quite a bit of uneasiness and concern in some quarters. Those in authority made their concern known, but the volunteer concept prevailed.

Since the volunteer army had been preceded by a significant pay raise and equal pay for equal work, the motivation for black youth to join the military continued without any noticeable sign of a slowdown. Many efforts to restrict mas-

sive black volunteerism by selective recruitment resulted in some actions that were elements of discrimination.

However, since the Vietnam War had left a feeling of animosity among many whites about the military, significant enlistments of blacks helped to maintain the services at their prescribed strength. The status of the military also declined among middle class whites. When this was coupled with the reality of greater opportunities for whites in civilian life, it was feared that the all-volunteer army would become a black army.

As the enlistment of blacks continued at an alarming pace, they began to realize that blacks were still in the lower pay scale and rating positions. Equal pay for equal work at the higher levels meant that basically, whites were getting equal pay with other whites. In a sense, this had always been the case. While black high school graduates were more likely than white high school graduates to enter the military services, whites were more likely to receive advancements in rank and pay than blacks.

The military was still a better place for many black youth. Not only did it give them the basic necessities of life with decent pay, it also afforded them an opportunity to travel to and live in different parts of the world. Even while in the United States, those blacks who married and had families, usually lived off the base. They and their families generally lived in integrated neighborhoods; their children usually attended integrated schools.

The low percentage of black officers continued to be a major concern among blacks. In 1964, black officers constituted only 3.3 percent of the army's officers. Fifteen years later, that figure had risen to only 6.8 percent. Considering the large number of black enlisted personnel in the army, that low percentage figure showed that there were still some drawbacks in the concept of equal opportunity and treatment for blacks.

Still the percentage of blacks in the Army continued to increase. One year after peace in Vietnam, blacks constituted 27 percent of the Army. Army Secretary Howard Calloway expressed his concern that the percentage of blacks in the army was nowhere near the proportionate percentage of blacks in the nation as a whole. Some black leaders became aware of Mr. Calloway's concern and pointed out that the same was true of black officers in the army, only the proportionate percentage was on the lower end. Nevertheless, Mr. Calloway stated that his feeling was that the Army should be more reflective "in the racial, geographic, and socio-economic sense." (Martin Binkin and Mark J. Eitelberg, *Blacks and the Military*, 1982, Page 3)

The charge against the Navy was that it initiated a quota system in order to restrict and control the number and percentage of blacks enlisting in that branch of service. Another feature of the Navy recruitment program was said to be the practice of recruiting low-level blacks who would wind up doing the menial work. This placed blacks in competition with other blacks for advancements. The Marine Corps also found itself accused of some discriminatory practices in its recruitment activities. It was charged that marine recruitment practices showed evidence of racial bias.

This was not true of the Air Force which had taken strong and immediate action to root out even the most subtle and covert practices of racial discrimination practiced in the military as the Vietnam Era came to a close. One source stated that the Air Force has always prided itself on being the service that was the first to effectively integrate. It reported further that "...and since that time in the immediate years following World War II, the Air Force seemed to be one step (or more) ahead of the other services in implementing various plans of integration such as the Gesell Committee reports of the mid-sixties."

Much of the advancement in race relations following Vietnam can go to the Air Force as a result of action it took following the racial disurbances at Travis Air Force Base in California. A Colonel Lucius Theus initiated some intergroup training activities that were based upon racial understanding seminars and the establishment of human relations councils. Those activities have been imitated, modified and expanded upon as models for the other branches of service. Nalty and McGregor state that:

"About one-half of the officers (in the military) have taken part in race relations seminars and human relations councils. About one-third of all white enlisted men and about 40 percent of all black enlisted men have attended seminars and councils. Officers and NCO's feel relations between soldiers have improved; understanding and efforts to promote understanding on the part of leaders have increased; and discrimination in job assignments, promotions and punishment have decreased."(Bernard Nalty and Morris McGregor, *Blacks in the Military*, p. 352)

At the outset, the Theus efforts concentrated upon racial relations, but four years later, the program was restructured and put under the control of the Defense Department. The current emphasis is upon the education and training of various specialists in areas related to reduced potential for racial conflict. All indications seem to point to the conclusion that efforts to reduce racial animosity in the American military seem to be effective.

It might be argued that equality of opportunity and treatment in the American military still has a way to go before the fullness of President Truman's Executive Order 9981 will be realized. The results that have been achieved thus far show very clearly that this nation's military has gone a long way in that direction. Charges of even minor discrimination get immediate attention, and integration has long been the rule rather than the exception.

The percentage of blacks in the military is disproportionately high with respect to the percentage of blacks in the nation as a whole. The highest percentage is in the Army, with 28 percent. This is followed by the Marines with 19 percent. The Air Force and the Navy have 15 and 14.4 percents respectively. This averages out to be slightly higher than 19 percent.

Figures for 1989 show that the Army is also higher in black officers with 10.6 percent. The Air Force was second with 5.4 percent black officers. The Marines with 5 percent and the Navy with 3.6 percent provide a reflection of black officers in the military as of 1989. That averages out to be 6.15 percent, less than the black percentage of the nation's population.

In the area of equality of opportunity, the black American's rise in rank

in the military has been nothing short of sensational. It is common practice to see blacks in all types of military positions, with all types of assignments and rank. At the present time, blacks in the Air Force are more than pilots. Some have risen to the rank of wing commanders, air base commanders and high ranking officers in other aspects of the defense posture.

Blacks have gone far beyond the messman branch only in the Navy since the outset of World War II. They have reached all ranks, from seamen to admirals. Some are pilots of the most sophisticated aircraft in the Navy, while others have been aircraft carrier commanders, submarine commanders and commanders of smaller ships. The Marines have had blacks serve in any number of positions in a like manner. At the present time, one black has reached the rank of lieutenant general.

The rosters at the service academies include the names of many blacks who have graduated, are still in attendance and are expected to graduate at a future date. Black American military persons have made their affiliations within the various branches of the service their career choices. At this nation's military encounter in Panama, black Americans were present and in action, doing what was expected of them, and doing their jobs the same as all other persons.